

June 20, 2003

**CERTIFICATION OF VHA CLINICIANS TREATING
FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR (FPOW)**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines policy and guidance for the implementation of an education and certification program for designated clinician members of the Special Former Prisoners of War (FPOW) Care and Benefits Team.

2. BACKGROUND

a. For the past 6 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s Employee Education System (EES) has presented a series of national workshops on the topic of meeting the needs of FPOW. These workshops have addressed the experiences of being a captive of the enemy during all of our nation's wars from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Hundreds of VHA clinicians and Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) staff have attended these programs.

b. As a direct consequence of these workshops, several VA Medical Centers and VA Regional Offices have developed highly effective and efficient teams dedicated to outreach and identification of FPOW, processing their disability claims and providing them with needed clinical services.

c. The two model programs that are acknowledged as centers of excellence in FPOW care are at the VA Medical Center and Regional Office in Jackson, MS, and Seattle, WA. These centers focus on improving access of FPOW to these specialized services.

d. VA plans to expand the number of Special FPOW Care and Benefit Teams beyond the two model programs; therefore, VHA will establish a certification program for designated clinicians who care for FPOW based on specified educational requirements.

e. VA Employee Education System, in collaboration with VA Central Office and field experts in FPOW clinical and benefits issues, will provide educational opportunities for certification by implementing a series of regional workshops specifically designed for these designated members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Teams.

f. Requirements for certification include:

- (1) Designation as a member of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team,
- (2) Documentation of participation in both the face-to-face training session and satisfactory completion of the EES FPOW case management training course, and
- (3) Completion of the self study module, "Veterans Health Initiative (VHI): American Ex-Prisoners of War."

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES JUNE 30, 2008

VHA DIRECTIVE 2003-033

June 20, 2003

g. Special FPOW Care and Benefits Teams will generally include no more than two clinicians.

h. Completion of the certification process will be tied to increased performance in efficiency of claims processing, customer satisfaction, and quality of care. In recognition of this increased performance, VHA physicians and/or other medical care providers who are certified members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team may receive a one-time cash award.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that Special FPOW Care and Benefit Teams are to be certified and established at appropriate sites across the VA health care system.

4. ACTION

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for establishing the FPOW Care and Benefits Oversight Group (FPOW CBOG) which must include members from EES, VHA, VBA Compensation and Pension (C&P) Division, and the FPOW Advisory Committee.

b. **FPOW CBOG.** FPOW CBOG is responsible for providing direction and coordination regarding the certification and activities involved in the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team process.

c. **EES.** EES is responsible for:

(1) Providing the lead in collaborating with VHA and VBA C&P on the creation of a series of regional Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team Workshops.

(2) Maintaining and up-dating the existing VHI FPOW module "VHI: American Ex-Prisoner of WAR."

(3) Maintaining the continuing education data, to include providing program participants with course completion certificates. ***NOTE: Participants need to submit their course completion certificates to the local facility for appropriate record-keeping.***

d. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring certification of clinicians who are members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team.

e. **Facility Director.** The facility Director is responsible for ensuring that local record keeping strategies are in place to track employees' completion of workshop and the VHI FPOW module

5. REFERENCES: "Veterans Health Initiative: American Ex-Prisoners of War," VA Employee Education System, 2001.

June 20, 2003

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief Consultant Mental Health Strategic Health Care Group (116) and the EES FPOW Program Manager are responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be directed to 202-273-8434, or 205-731-1812, extension 206.

7. RESCISSIONS: None. This VHA Directive expires June 30, 2008.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 6/20/03
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mailed 6/20/03